

GHI Transition Task Force

REPORT on 2022 Transition Input from Members, 2/15/2022

Background

GHI's Sustainability and Succession Task Force began meeting in October 2019 to develop tools and solicit input to help position GHI for a successful General Manager transition when Eldon Ralph, our talented General Manager, decides to retire. (Mr. Ralph has assured us that he will give us ample notice of his plans.) The Sustainability and Succession Task Force was succeeded by the current Transition Task Force, established by the GHI Board in November, 2020. Both Task Forces have tried to pave the way for a thoughtful and deliberative leadership transition which will position GHI to attract the best candidates and ensure our future.

Survey

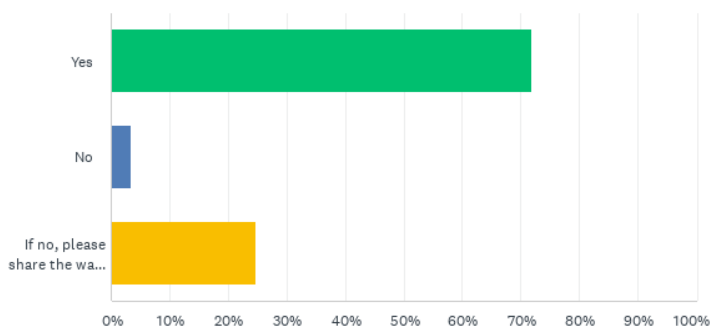
The Transition Task Force designed and made broadly available to all GHI members a survey soliciting input on top issues impacting the upcoming leadership transition. The purpose of the survey is to assist the Board, members, and staff in preparing for a change in General Manager, and to provide guidance related to the hiring and onboarding of a new General Manager when that occurs.

The survey invited member input on what members value about our cooperative and how it operates, as well as what members would like to see changed for the cooperative to serve them and other members better. This input provides guidance to the Board to develop the position requirements and responsibilities for the new General Manager.

The survey launched in early January 2022 and closed on February 9th. The survey was publicized broadly through the GHI Newsletter, weekly announcements in the *Greenbelt News Review*, emails, and word of mouth. Members were invited to participate online or through a paper survey. In all, 273 people responded to the survey, with 269 online responses and 4 submitted on paper. The response rate – particularly for paper surveys – may have been negatively impacted by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

The following is a summary of the survey's key findings. The results start with Question 3 because Questions 1 and 2 related to participation in a raffle to win gift certificates to the Greenbelt Co-op Supermarket.

Q3 GHI is a 1,600 member cooperative that is self-governed by a 9 member Board of Directors, assisted by committees and task forces. This model places a high value on member involvement in decisions. Do you think GHI's governance model is successful in involving members in decision making?

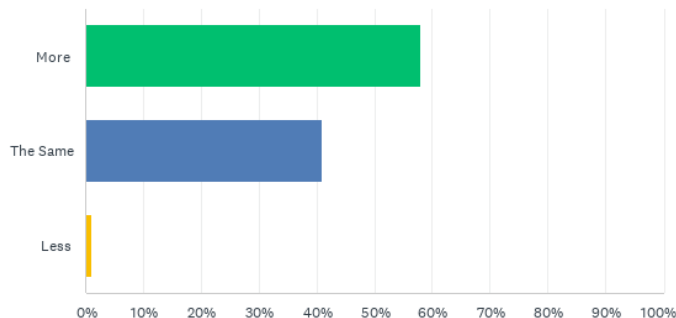


Survey respondents overwhelmingly (72%) think that GHI's governance model is successful in involving members in decision making. Sixty six people offered suggestions about how better to involve members. Keeping in mind that 72% of respondents (196 members) indicated the governance model was successful in involving members, those expressing a desire for change mentioned the following areas:

- communication with members
- specific issues related to governance
- timeliness of response from staff
- policies about permits
- and other issues specific to the member.

The Board will review all suggestions as part of their ongoing commitment to expanding member engagement and understanding of GHI and cooperative living.

Q4 Going forward, do you hope that GHI members have more, the same, or less involvement in decisions?



Survey respondents differed about the desire of more involvement in GHI decisions:

- 58% (156) want more involvement
- 41% (111) want the same level of involvement
- 1% want less involvement

Q5 When members want to make alterations to their units, they are guided by rules designed to maintain community standards, safety and aesthetics. Based on your experiences, how do you feel about the number of rules and standards related to individual homes and common spaces?



Survey respondents were even more evenly split on the question about the number of rules designed to maintain community standards:

- 42% (114) think the number of rules and standards is about right
- 39% (107) think there are too many rules and standards.
- 4% (11) think there should be more rules and standards
- 14% (39) were unsure

This information is germane to the transition because while the Board administers the rules, the General Manager spends a great deal of time working with the Board and members to provide background information for these decisions. Additionally, this information may be helpful to the Board as the GHI Handbook undergoes its current revision to make the rules clearer and more accessible to members.

Q6 "When GHI looks for a new general manager, a variety of skills and experiences will be important. Knowing that no one candidate is likely to have all the skills required for this position, please help the Board understand the skills and experiences that are most important to you."

The answers are ordered from the ones deemed the most important (with the highest weighted average) to the ones with the lowest weighted average. Weighted averages are calculated by Survey Monkey by assigning a number value to each choice and then multiplying the assigned value by the number of respondents. This input can be helpful to the GHI Search and Transition Committee when finalizing the position profile and job description for the next General Manager. (Note, the survey did not ask about the title of GHI's top executive. There has been discussion of changing the title to Executive Director or Chief Executive Officer.)

The following table summarizes members response to Question 6

Priority Skills and Experiences for Next GHI General Manager (Ranked from Highest to Lowest)						
	NOT IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	NOT SURE	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
- Ability to develop systems and policies to manage GHI	0.37% 1	3.75% 10	28.09% 75	67.04% 179	0.75% 2	3.64
- Strong interpersonal skills	0.38% 1	4.92% 13	26.89% 71	67.80% 179	0.00% 0	3.62
- Strong leader who inspires confidence and commitment of membership and staff	0.00% 0	3.00% 8	32.96% 88	62.92% 168	1.12% 3	3.62

**Priority Skills and Experiences for Next GHI General Manager
(Ranked from Highest to Lowest)**

	NOT IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	NOT SURE	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
- Strong financial management skills	0.75% 2	7.17% 19	43.02% 114	48.30% 128	0.75% 2	3.41
- Understanding of how to build an inclusive work and living environment	0.77% 2	13.79% 36	32.95% 86	51.72% 135	0.77% 2	3.38
- Technical knowledge related to needs of aging residential properties	0.37% 1	13.43% 36	41.04% 110	44.03% 118	1.12% 3	3.32
- Ability to interact with local government officials to advance GHI's goals	1.87% 5	10.11% 27	48.69% 130	37.45% 100	1.87% 5	3.27
- Experience working with boards and membership associations	0.75% 2	13.91% 37	46.99% 125	37.22% 99	1.13% 3	3.24
- Understanding of communications and technology to foster collaboration and efficiency	0.75% 2	15.73% 42	49.81% 133	32.96% 88	0.75% 2	3.17
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**Priority Skills and Experiences for Next GHI General Manager
(Ranked from Highest to Lowest)**

	NOT IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	NOT SURE	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Ability to identify new revenue sources for GHI to help stabilize fee increases	5.62% 15	19.10% 51	36.33% 97	36.70% 98	2.25% 6	3.11
Experience working with housing cooperatives	3.01% 8	25.56% 68	48.12% 128	22.56% 60	0.75% 2	2.92

Q7 Please indicate the level of importance you place on each of the following aspects of living at GHI.

Respondents were told that the aspects “deemed most important will likely be prioritized during the leadership transition,” and so were asked “to distinguish between those that are very important to you and those that are less important to you and limit yourself to only 3 very important areas”

The answers to this question can be helpful to the Board and Search and Transition Committee in developing performance priorities and expectations for the new General Manager’s first six months and year.

The following table summarizes members response to Question 7

	NOT IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Inclusion of major maintenance in co-op fees	1.87% 5	4.85% 13	32.09% 86	60.45% 162 3.53
Preservation of open space, landscaping and/or woodlands	0.38% 1	8.68% 23	42.26% 112	47.92% 127 3.40
Flexibility to adapt unit over time to meet changing needs (expanding family, aging in place, etc.)	1.13% 3	13.91% 37	37.97% 101	46.24% 123 3.32
Connections to neighbors/sense of community	1.53% 4	13.36% 35	48.85% 128	35.50% 93 3.21
Maintenance of walkways to ensure walkability to a range of services and businesses	1.89% 5	13.58% 36	52.45% 139	32.08% 85 3.15
Living in a diverse community (age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, income, race, sexual orientation, disability)	4.85% 13	16.04% 43	42.91% 115	35.82% 96 3.11
Affordability of my unit at purchase	5.73% 15	16.41% 43	43.13% 113	32.82% 86 3.09
Value of my unit at resale	5.30% 14	15.91% 42	48.11% 127	30.30% 80 3.05
Ability to participate in board, committee, and task force decisions	2.26% 6	22.56% 60	50.00% 133	24.44% 65 2.99

Q8 What do you see as the greatest challenges facing GHI?

Respondents were told: “The challenges were taken from the Long-Range Planning Committee's recent report. The challenges that are deemed most important will likely be prioritized during the leadership transition, so please try to distinguish between those that are critical and those that are less critical and limit yourself to only 3 critical challenges. You will be given an opportunity to add more challenges at the end.”

The critical challenge posed by aging housing with increasing maintenance costs was ranked the highest choice by 18 percentage points. Reminder: Weighted averages are calculated by Survey Monkey by assigning a number value to each choice and then multiplying the assigned value by the number of respondents.

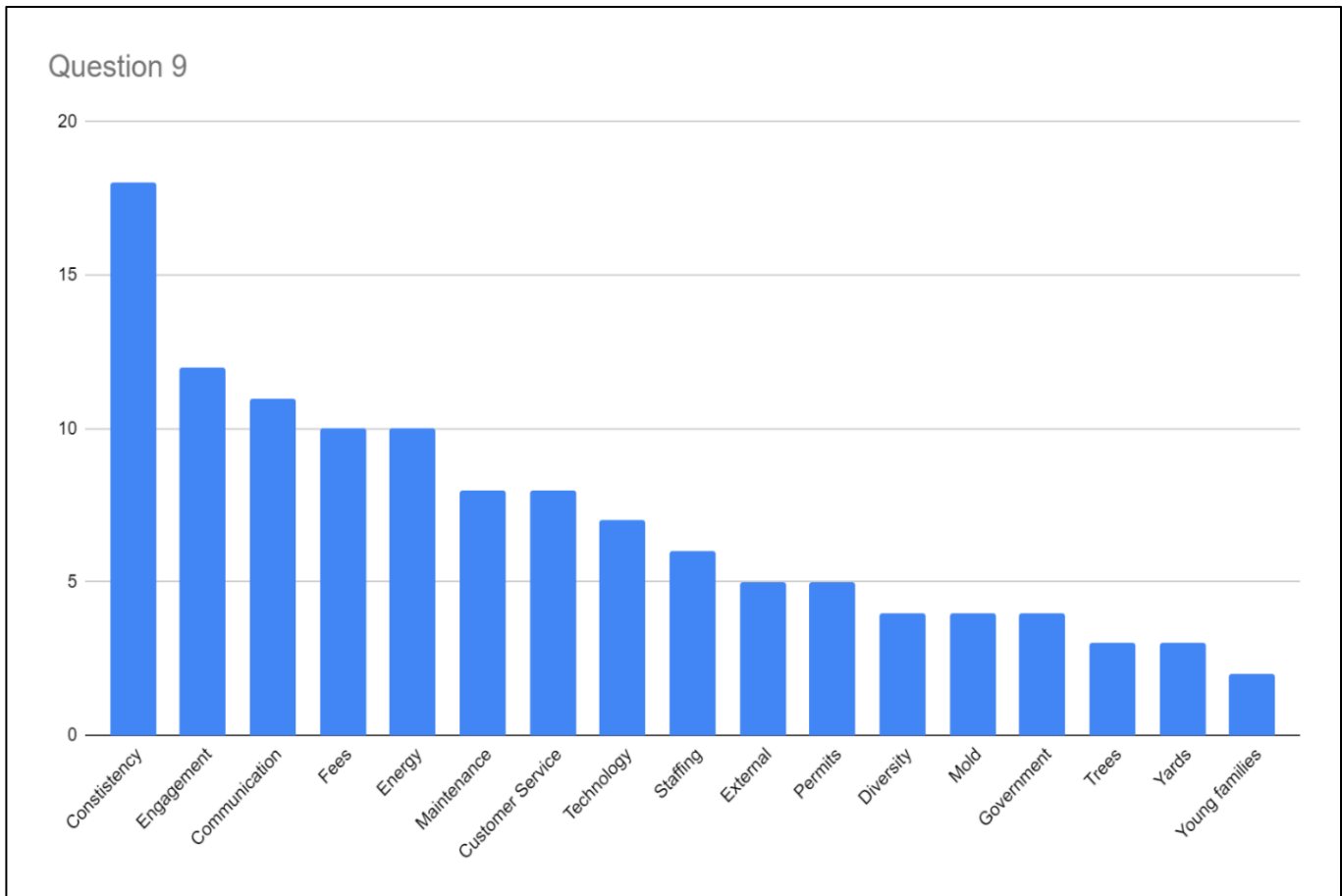
The following table summarizes members response to Question 8

	NOT A CHALLENGE	MODERATELY IMPORTANT CHALLENGE	CRITICAL CHALLENGE	I'M NOT SURE	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Aging housing with increasing maintenance costs	0.74% 2	15.19% 41	81.48% 220	2.59% 7	2.86
Hiring and retaining talented staff	2.23% 6	31.97% 86	63.57% 171	2.23% 6	2.66
Affordability of fees	1.89% 5	36.74% 97	60.23% 159	1.14% 3	2.61
Preparing GHI for climate change	11.79% 31	57.79% 152	24.71% 65	5.70% 15	2.24
Preservation and maintenance of green space	13.41% 35	53.26% 139	32.18% 84	1.15% 3	2.21
Balancing Individual member requests with desire for community standards	7.92% 21	66.04% 175	24.15% 64	1.89% 5	2.20
Expanding the number of services provided	29.92% 79	48.48% 128	12.50% 33	9.09% 24	2.01
Expanding the number of staff	24.42% 63	50.00% 129	11.63% 30	13.95% 36	2.15
Improving pedestrian and bike connections	29.77% 78	56.11% 147	9.92% 26	4.20% 11	1.89

	NOT A CHALLENGE	MODERATELY IMPORTANT CHALLENGE	CRITICAL CHALLENGE	I'M NOT SURE	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Attracting younger residents	33.46% 88	51.33% 135	13.31% 35	1.90% 5	1.84

Q9 If there are other significant challenges, please share in the box below.

Responses were broad and varied. The following chart aggregates the comments into the most commonly mentioned challenges.



Q10: What other thoughts do you want to share related to the GHI General Manager search and transition?

Other Thoughts Shared by Survey Respondents

Many diverse opinions on a variety of matters were expressed in answer to Question #10, which asked respondents to add any other thoughts they had about GHI and its upcoming search for a new General Manager.

Themes that emerged from the many comments:

The need for the new General Manager to be both a strong leader and one who also respects the history and culture of GHI. The General Manager's ability to hire, lead, delegate to, and motivate key staff positions were seen as critical for the position. Mr. Ralph received near unanimous high praise, and several people requested that he be involved in training his successor. Concern about retaining qualified employees and managers was also noted.

As for the history and culture of GHI, many commenters stressed that knowledge of cooperatives would be important for a new General Manager. They also want someone who will respect members and employees and be a good listener. Maintaining GHI as an affordable community was also seen as a key identifying trait of our co-op. Retaining and/or strong customer service policy was also key. GHI's commitment to sustainable environmental practices was also a theme.

Improving communication capabilities, including revising the IT infrastructure. Some members want to be more informed about co-op issues, some want an improved website that allows them to conduct GHI business, others asked for the ability to continue meetings on Zoom and the ability to watch Zoom meetings after they have occurred. There was a concern that communicating rules in an understandable fashion and more consistent administration of the rules was necessary, particularly when the rules involve the permit process. Re-examining the rules and rationale for particular rules was also emphasized.

Concern for maintaining the co-op's homes in good condition as the buildings age. Appreciation of the good maintenance services was expressed, while at the same time, some members called for improvements in maintenance services, indicating perhaps that maintenance is something members find important.